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CA/OCS/CI FOR RUTH LINCOLN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LESOTHO LIFTS SUSPENSION ON INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION

¶1. On December 10, 2008, Consular Chief met with Ms. Limakatso Chisepo, Director of the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health, in regards to the suspension of the international adoption of children in Lesotho. Ms. Chisepo stated that after the investigation of the issue by the Commission of Inquiry, both the Cabinet and Parliament came to a decision on November 11, 2008, and agreed to lift the suspension on inter-country adoptions for four countries: U.S., Sweden, Netherlands and Canada, with certain conditions applying.

¶2. One restriction is to coordinate inter-country adoptions through only one designated adoption agency per country. The designated adoption agency is to assist in monitoring the progress of the child and provide follow-ups to the ministry. Local adoptions will continue to take precedence over inter-country adoptions and only children who cannot be adopted in-country would qualify for inter-country adoption. The Ministry of Health is currently working on designating the adoption agencies to be used from each county. In regards to the U.S., they currently have inquiries from two agencies: Reaching Out and Americans for African Adoptions.

¶3. The Department of Social Welfare is presently working on forming an adoption committee consisting of five members: Members of Parliament, social workers, and a legal officer of the ministry or from the Attorney General's office. This committee should be established no later than January 2009. The role of this adoption committee would be to work with the designated adoption agency in making a well-organized and successful adoption process.

¶4. One recommendation presented by the Commission in a previous report is that Lesotho should consider ratifying the Hague Convention. Ms. Chisepo stressed the need for clarification with respect to the Hague convention. Deputy Chief of Mission and Consular Chief will meet in early January 2009 with Ms. Chisepo and other members of the ministry to clarify their doubts about Hague.

¶5. Consular section obtained a copy of the Commissioner's Report on December 17, 2008, currently not available to the public.

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